The Transportation System in Brief

In 2004, the Bay Area population surpassed the 7 million mark. These Bay Area residents were on the go, taking more than 21 million trips on an average weekday, or about three trips per person each day in order to get to work, school, shopping or other activities. More than 84 percent of all trips were by automobile. Walking and biking were the next most common ways to get around (10 percent of all trips); naturally, trips made by walking and biking tend to be shorter distances. About 6 percent of all trips were by public transit, and the majority of these trips occurred during commute hours. Over the course of the year, more than 30 billion miles were logged on the region's freeways, and over 475 million transit trips were taken (see table below).

Bay Area residents' appetite for travel increased in 2004, reflecting a strengthening regional economy. Freeway miles driven rose by 4 percent. Regional employment held more or less steady, after three years of decline, while population nudged up 1 percent. The number of transit trips fell slightly from year-earlier levels to a 5-year low.

While the number of jobs in the region has declined and population growth has slowed in the last few years, long-term forecasts assume a rebound. By 2030, the region's population is expected to grow to 8.8 million people, and employment will expand to 5.2 million jobs. MTC predicts the number of trips will grow to 28.5 million each day, increasing wear-and-tear and making other demands on Bay Area roads and transit. MTC's long-range transportation investment strategy for the region, adopted in 2005 as the *Transportation 2030 Plan,* addresses these growing needs. A full 80 percent of the $118 billion in revenues expected over the 25-year plan period would be devoted to basic maintenance needs and ongoing operations. Even that level of investment is not sufficient to fully address the projected maintenance needs. To meet increased travel demands, the *Transportation 2030 Plan* calls for 4 percent of the funds to be spent on low-cost operational improvements that squeeze more efficiency out of the transportation system, and the remaining 16 percent on strategic expansion of the region's transit and roadway network.

Population, Employment and Travel in the Bay Area, 2000–2004

	In Thousands					Percent Change	
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2003–2004	2000–2004
Residents	6,818	6,917	6,956	6,994	7,064	+1%	+4%
Jobs	3,541	3,506	3,334	3,218	3,215	–0.1%	–9%
Vehicle Miles Driven on Freeways	28,654,600	28,996,200	29,190,800	29,278,100	30,346,000	+4%	+6%
Transit Trips	506,107	533,038	514,958	478,587	475,016	–1%	–6%

Sources: California Employment Development Department, California Department of Finance, Caltrans, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Transit trips data is compiled by fiscal year, e.g., data listed for 2004 represents July 1, 2003–June 30, 2004.

Transit ridership data is provisional. Vehicle miles driven on freeways data for 2004 is provisional.

The Freeway System and State Highway System

The Bay Area's 620-mile freeway system is the workhorse of the transportation network. In 2004, vehicles traveled more than 30 billion miles on Bay Area freeways — about 60 percent of all miles driven by trucks and passenger vehicles in the region. The freeway system includes 323 miles of "diamond lanes" that allow people in carpools, vanpools and buses to bypass congestion during peak commute hours. In 2004, carpool lanes carried 16 percent of the vehicles and 29 percent of the people in the peak commute hour on freeway segments with carpool lanes. This is a slight decrease from 2003, when carpool lanes carried 31 percent of people in the peak commute hour.

A good portion of the region's freeway system is equipped with high-tech devices designed to increase freeway efficiency and better serve travelers. More than 450 miles of freeway are equipped with roadway sensors and video cameras that can detect slow-downs. Travelers can check for freeway delays throughout the region and get point-to-point driving times on 470 miles of the freeway system by calling 511 or visiting the 511.org Web site. In addition, the roving tow trucks of the Freeway Service Patrol cruise along some 458 miles of the most congested freeways and expressways, helping motorists with car trouble, removing debris or quickly clearing accidents.

The region's core freeway system is supplemented by 800 miles of state highways. Most of these state-owned roadways are the major thoroughfares linking communities in the outer suburban and rural parts of the Bay Area. These highways include State Routes 12, 29 and 37 in the North Bay, State Route 4 in eastern Contra Costa County, State Route 1 along the San Mateo County coastline, and State Route 152 in southern Santa Clara County. A small number of state highways run through the heart of urban areas and are indistinguishable to most travelers from locally owned urban roadways. Such roads include El Camino Real from San Jose to San Francisco (State Route 82) and San Pablo Avenue (State Route 123) from Oakland to Hercules in the East Bay.

Toll Bridges

Seven state-owned toll bridges and the Golden Gate Bridge grace the San Francisco Bay. In 2004, over 133 million vehicles crossed the seven state-owned toll bridges in the Bay Area, generating approximately $313 million in total toll revenues. Since June 2000, motorists on the Golden Gate Bridge have been able to use the FasTrak™ electronic toll collection system to pay tolls. Motorists on the state-owned bridges have been able to use FasTrak™ since December 2000. In 2004, new FasTrak™-only lanes opened on the San Mateo-Hayward and Dumbarton bridges.

The Local Roadway Network

Bay Area cities and counties own and maintain more than 19,000 centerline miles of local roadways, which must balance the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians as well as those traveling by buses and private automobiles. About half of the more than 7,000 traffic signals on the region's local roadway system are synchronized to reduce the amount of time people spend waiting at red lights during weekday peak travel periods. The timing for about one-fifth of those signals has been recently updated for current traffic volumes, resulting in an average 13 percent reduction in travel time for the nearly 70 corridors that were retimed. In some major bus corridors, signals are programmed to give preferential treatment to buses that are running late so they can get back on schedule.

The Public Transit System

In fiscal year 2003-04, some two dozen Bay Area transit operators provided 188 million vehicle miles of service and carried more than 475 million passengers. Buses provide just under half of all service miles and carry nearly two-thirds of all passengers. BART, commuter rail, light rail, ferries, and door-to-door vans and taxis that serve elderly and disabled riders (called paratransit service) carry the remaining third. A total of 21 major intermodal terminals are the focus of a regional Transit Connectivity Study intended to improve the ease and efficiency of transferring between transit systems.

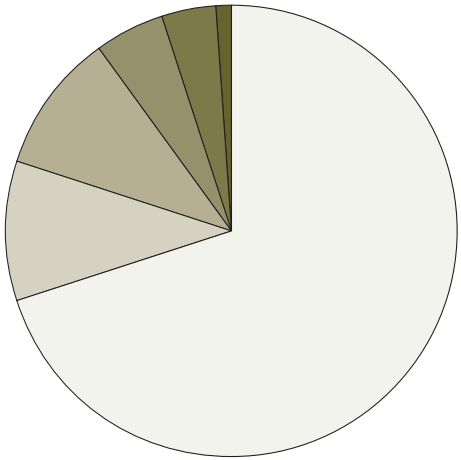
The region's operators have long been recognized nationally as leaders in making the transit system accessible to persons with disabilities. Today, more than 90 percent of the region's buses and 95 percent of transit centers and rail stations are accessible to persons using wheelchairs.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

The ability to get around safely on foot or by bicycle is increasingly recognized as an essential factor in a neighborhood's quality of life. Also, there is a growing recognition that walking and cycling can help to promote healthier lifestyles and combat health conditions associated with decreasing levels of physical activity, such as obesity and diabetes.

The network used by bicyclists and pedestrians is ubiquitous. It includes the entire local roadway system, as well as sidewalks and some dedicated pathways. In addition, most buses and trains now accommodate bicycles. Bicycles and pedestrians are excluded from most freeways for safety purposes, but access is provided on Bay Area toll bridges, either through bicycle lanes, special vans or transit service connections. Still, there are numerous locations without sidewalks or bicycle lanes; in such cases,

How Bay Area Workers Commuted, 2004



Drove Alone	**70%**
Carpooled	**10%**
Public Transportation	**10%**
Worked at Home	**5%**
Walked or Bicycled	**4%**
Other Means*	**1%**

Source: 2004 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau)

*"Other Means" includes motorcycle and taxi.

bicyclists and pedestrians must share a lane with traffic. The safety of pedestrians and cyclists is a topic of increasing concern, and programs such as Safe Routes to School and other safety initiatives are being deployed by jurisdictions around the region.

The *2001 Regional Transportation Plan* proposed a 1,900-mile network of regionally significant bicycle facilities; the plan also identified gaps in city- and county-level bicycle plans and recommended specific improvements to fill these gaps. Approximately 35 percent of the regional network exists today. Regionwide, bicycling accounts for 1 percent of all trips, and walking accounts for about 9 percent. However, for trips to school, bicycling accounts for about 4 percent of trips and walking for more than 20 percent.

Airports and Seaports

The region's airports and seaports are gateways to the rest of the country and the world for tourism, business travel and trade. Most residents are familiar with the major international airports in San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose. Less well known are the region's major seaports and their cargo specialties: Oakland (container cargo); San Francisco and Redwood City (construction materials); and Richmond (gasoline and oil). Handling over 57 million passengers and 2 million containers a year, the Bay Area's airports and seaports also generate considerable ground traffic in surrounding areas.